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BY-PASS ROADS
MU GIA PASS AREA, LAOS

1. SIGNIFICANCE:

THIS BRIEFING BOARD REVEALS THE CURRENT ALIGNMENT OF THREE BY-PASSES AROUND A PORTION OF ROUTE 12 AND THE MU GIA PASS CHOKE POINT IN LAOS.

2. LOCATION:

THE MU GIA PASS IS LOCATED ON THE NORTH VIETNAM/LAOS BORDER, APPROXIMATELY SIXTY NM SOUTH-SOUTHWEST OF VINH, NORTH VIETNAM. THE MU GIA PASS CHOKE POINT IS LOCATED ON ROUTE 12 FIVE NM SOUTH-SOUTHWEST OF THE NORTH VIETNAM/LAOS BORDER.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

THE FIRST AIR STRIKES AGAINST THE MU GIA PASS CHOKE POINT WERE CONDUCTED IN FEBRUARY 1965, AND WERE CONCENTRATED IN THE AREA WHERE ROUTE 12 HAS SEVERAL SWITCHBACKS. THE SUMMIT OF THE PASS LIES FURTHER NORTH OF THIS AREA.

UNTIL THE BY-PASSES WERE CONSTRUCTED AROUND THE MU GIA PASS CHOKE POINT, THIS SEGMENT OF A MAJOR INFILTRATION ROUTE INTO LAOS WAS HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO INTERDICTION BY AIR STRIKES. THE TREE COVER IN THE AREA OF THE CHOKE POINT WAS ALSO DESTROYED, RENDERING ROUTE 12 UNSERVICEABLE DURING THE RAINY SEASON BECAUSE

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OF THE RESULTING LANDSLIDES AND WASHOUTS. DURING THE DRY SEASON, ROUTE 12 SERVICEABILITY WAS MAINTAINED BY EXTENSIVE REPAIR ACTIVITIES THAT WERE CARRIED OUT AFTER EACH AIR STRIKE. BY THE END OF 1965 ONLY SMALL SECTIONS OF THE ORIGINAL ALIGNMENT OF ROUTE 12 THROUGH THE CHOKE POINT REMAINED SERVICEABLE BECAUSE OF THE EXTENSIVE CRATERING, FILLING OPERATIONS, LANDSLIDES, AND SMALL BY-PASSES THAT WERE CONSTRUCTED AROUND THE DAMAGED AREAS.

THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHY THAT INDICATED THE PASS WAS CLOSED AND IN DISUSE DURING THE RAINY SEASON WAS OBTAINED IN JULY 1965. PHOTOGRAPHY OF [REDACTED], FIRST REVEALED TRACK ACTIVITY THROUGH THE CHOKE POINT AS THE RAINY SEASON ENDED. (COLLATERAL SOURCES HAD REPORTED NO VEHICLES THROUGH THIS AREA FROM LATE MARCH 1965 TO MID-NOVEMBER 1965.)

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4. BY-PASS ROUTES:

THE FIRST BY-PASS ROAD, NOW DESIGNATED ROUTE 12/23 BY-PASS, WAS OBSERVED ON TROJAN HORSE [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] THIS BY-PASS STARTS 0.5 NM SOUTH OF THE NORTH VIETNAM/LAOS BORDER, THEN EXTENDS ROUGHLY PARALLEL TO AND EAST OF ROUTE 12, AND CONNECTS WITH ROUTE 23 JUST SOUTH OF THE JUNCTION OF ROUTES 12 AND 23. AVAILABLE PHOTOGRAPHY INDICATES THE BY-PASS IS A SINGLE LANE, NATURAL SURFACE, DRY-WEATHER ROAD, ALTHOUGH THE FULL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BY-PASS

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COULD NOT BE ASCERTAINED BECAUSE OF THE VERY HEAVY TREE COVER THAT WAS UNDISTURBED IN THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE. IT IS ALSO NOTED THAT WHERE THE BY-PASS JOINS ROUTE 23, SEVERAL ACCESS ROADS WERE CONSTRUCTED TO LIMIT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AIR STRIKES AT THE JUNCTION.

THE SECOND BY-PASS ROAD, NOW DESIGNATED ROUTE 12/23 BY-PASS EAST, WAS IMAGED ON TROJAN HORSE [REDACTED] 25X1
AND TROJAN HORSE [REDACTED] THE SECOND BY-PASS 25X1
ROUTE EXTENDS FROM ROUTE 12/23 BY-PASS FROM A POINT LOCATED APPROXIMATELY FOUR NM SOUTH OF THE JUNCTION OF ROUTE 12 AND ROUTE 12/23 BY-PASS, THEN EXTENDS EASTWARD BEYOND ROUTE 12/23 BY-PASS, THEN SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST TO ROUTE 23, 6.5 NM SOUTH OF THE JUNCTION OF ROUTES 12 AND 23. THE SECOND BY-PASS AVOIDS THE INTERDICTION POINTS ON ROUTE 23 SOUTH OF THE JUNCTION OF ROUTES 12 AND 23. SEVERAL ACCESS ROADS TO ROUTE 23 WERE CONSTRUCTED TO REDUCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AIR STRIKES AT THE JUNCTION. THE SECOND BY-PASS IS A SINGLE LANE, NATURAL SURFACE, DRY WEATHER ROAD THAT HAS UTILIZED THE NATURAL TREE COVER AND TERRAIN EXTENSIVELY FOR EASE OF CONSTRUCTION AND FOR CAMOUFLAGE.

THE THIRD BY-PASS (POSSIBLY A ROAD) WAS OBSERVED ON [REDACTED] THIS BY-PASS, NOW DESIGNATED 25X1
ROUTE 12 BY-PASS WEST, EXTENDS FROM ROUTE 12, JUST WEST OF THE

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JUNCTION OF ROUTES 12 AND 23, NORTH TO THE VICINITY OF THE MU GIA PASS CHOKE POINT. THE BY-PASS CONSISTS OF A CLEARING OPERATION ALONG THE EAST SIDE OF THE KARST RIDGE LINE, AND WAS CONSIDERED STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION ON THE DATE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHY. PHOTOGRAPHY INDICATED THAT THIS BY-PASS POSSIBLY CONNECTS WITH ROUTE 12 APPROXIMATELY 0.5 NM NORTH OF THE CHOKE POINT, BUT THE QUALITY OF PHOTOGRAPHY PRECLUDED ACCURATE ANALYSIS.

5. UNIDENTIFIED BY-PASS:

IN NOVEMBER 1965, COLLATERAL REPORTS INDICATED THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER BY-PASS ROUTE AROUND ROUTE 12 AND THE CHOKE POINT. THIS ROUTE REPORTEDLY STARTED ON ROUTE 12 NEAR THE NORTH VIETNAM/LAOS BORDER (AND POSSIBLY IN NORTH VIETNAM), THEN EXTENDED SOUTHEAST TO BAN XONNE (UTM WE8846), THEN SOUTH AND WEST TO BAN PHA NOP (UTM WE8039) WHERE THE BY-PASS JOINED ROUTE 23. PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE AREA OF THE REPORTED BY-PASS REVEALED NO TRACK ACTIVITY OR OTHER EVIDENCE THAT A MOTORABLE BY-PASS EXISTED IN THIS AREA. (AMS SERIES L7012, SHEET 6163 I, SHOWS A TRAIL LEADING NORTHWEST AND SOUTH OF BAN XONNE ALONG THE GENERAL ALIGNMENT OF THE REPORTED BY-PASS).

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